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Dated 7-6-48

[Despatch Abstract.]

Cinematographth - Constitution of a Central Board of Film Censors in India - Opinion of the Govt of Madras - Forwarded to the Govt of India.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS
Home Department
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Letter+Ms. No. 2177.

From

O.Pulla Reddi Esq., I.C.S.,
Secretary to Government.

To

The Secretary to the Government of India,
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting,
N E W D E L H I.

Fort St. George, Madras, dated 7th June 1948.

Sir,

CINEMATOGRAPH - Constitution of a Central Board of Censorship of films in India.

Ref:- Mr.M.A.Hussain's letter No. 36/1/48-F dated 15th April, 1948.

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I am directed to refer to the Madras Government's letter No.162 Law (General) dated 10th January 1929 communicating their views on some of the recommendations of the Indian cinematograph Committee. This Government were not even then in favour of accepting the suggestion of the Committee to establish a Central Censorship Authority and they consider that they must still adhere to that view. The Committee's report of 1928 is obsolete now as the conditions then prevailing in the Cinema Industry both in regard to production and exhibition have changed rapidly and there have been considerable developments and progress. The Committee's recommendations in question will therefore have inadequate bearing on modern conditions. The comment made by the Committee in paragraph 255 of its report relating to the Madras Board of Censors cannot any longer hold good. I am in this connection to invite attention to the Madras Government's letter No.3108 Law (General) dated 24th August, 193 The Committee's investigations were made over twenty years ago when there were no studios for production in Madras and the output was very limited. In recent years the studios in this in the last three years, in spite of the restrictions about the import of raw films, 45 pictures have been produced.

2. The constitution of a Central Board will now have to be viewed from a totally different angle. The Central Board of Censors may be in an authoritative position to give suggestions for the whole of the Indian Union and the merged States; but account will now have to be taken of the considerable delay and expenditure caused to producers. Film production in India is no an expensive business and the producers commit themselves to colossal expenditure. Any delay either in censoring or in the issue of certificates would result in considerable hardship and loss to them. The Madras Producers especially would be adversel affected because of the distance and time involved in taking pictures from the south to places like Bombay or Delhi where the Central Censor Board would presumably function.

* Province have made very rapid progress and on an average.

P.T.O.

3. Provincial considerations and provincial requirements have also to be taken into account in film production. It cannot justifiably be claimed that a Telugu, Tamil, Kannada or Malayalam film produced in this Province will receive that amount of careful attention and scrutiny at the hands of the Central Board as it now does from the Provincial Board; Further it will not be possible to provide representation in the Central Board for all the Provincial languages, much less representations which can be considered satisfactory and efficient. Provincial languages are assuming greater importance and the number of picutres produced in them is rapidly increasing.

4. In the circumstances the Madras Government consider that it is neither necessary not desirable in the interests of indigenous film industry in India to set up a Central Board of Censors. In a film producing centre, such as the Madras Province where films in various languages are produced in large numbers, there should be a Provincial Board on which representatives of the languages concerned may be represented so that the locally produced films may receive careful attention and scrutiny with due regard to local conditions, needs and susceptibilities.

5. The committee's main object in proposing a central Board of Censors was to achieve uniformity and co-ordination in censoring films. In America, Great Britain and in most other countries, there are well defined censor codes. In America, the Hayes Code has been in existence which has been copied more or less by other countries with alterations to suit local conditions. The Madras Board of Film Censors has drawn up a code for the guidance of producers and censors on the limes of the Hayes Code. For the purpose of promoting uniformity in the standards of production and censoring of films, the Central Government may prescribe a censor code based on this code or other Provincial codes and leave it to the Provinces to administer the Central Code through the local Boards of Censors. In order to co-ordinate the work of all Provincial Boards it is no doubt desirable to have a Central Organisation. But it need not necessarily be a Central Board of Censors. The Madras Government consider that the object in view can very well be achieved by establishing a Central Film Advisory Committee or Board, instead of a Central Board of Censors, in addition to the Provincial Censor Boards. The Provincial Governments may nominate one or two representatives on this Board, of whom one may be from the local Board. The Committee can meet periodically and review the work of Provincial Censor Boards and issue directions for a uniform policy. This will not only effect economy but will also improve efficiency and a uniform policy can be implemented without detriment to efficient censoring by Provincial Boards.

6. As regards the criticism that films Passed for release by one Provincial Board have not infrequently been declared uncertified in another Province, I am to say that it is a general convention that if one Censoring Board has certified a film for public exhibition, the other Boards accept it, unless there are some special local restrictions or laws, such as Prohibition in this Province, which may adversely be affected by the exhibition of the film. In these cases the film is re-censored. No difficulty has been felt in the practical working of the rules framed under the Cinematograph Act relating to procedure for censorship.

7. This Government are strongly against proposals for centralising the censorship of films at any particular place for all India and the Provincial Government should also continue to have an absolute right to uncertify films approved by other Provinces or centres which may be considered unsuitable for exhibition within the province.

/True copy/

Yours obedient servant,
sd.
for SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT.

GK.29.5.

Superintendent
Madras Record Office.